

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building

Other name/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

## 2. Location

Street &amp; number: 2720 Leeland Street

City or town: Houston

State: Texas

County: Harris

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
(☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (☒ meets ☐ does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official / Title

Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register☐ determined eligible for the National Register☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.☐ removed from the National Register☐ other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

SBR Draft

Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

### Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** COMMERCE/TRADE / Office Building; INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION / Manufacturing Facility

**Current Functions:** VACANT

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** MODERN MOVEMENT / Modern Classical

**Principal Exterior Materials:** CONCRETE, METAL

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

**SBR Draft**

Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>A</b>	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>B</b>	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>C</b>	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>D</b>	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Commerce, Industry, Architecture

**Period of Significance:** 1938-1956

**Significant Dates:** 1938

**Significant Person** (only if criterion b is marked): NA

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion d is marked): NA

**Architect/Builder:** Russell Brown Company

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheet xx-xx)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): NA

**SBR Draft**

Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property:** 0.69

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 29°44'35.41"N      Longitude: 95°21'12.32"W

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building occupies TRS 1 & 2 ABST 75 H TIERWESTER, Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Boundary Justification:** Once part of a larger functionally-related complex, the boundary includes the only remaining legal parcel historically associated with the building.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Hannah Curry-Shearouse, Lauren Maas

Organization: SWCA Environmental Consultants

Street & number: 10245 W. Little York, Suite 600

City or Town: Houston

State: TX

Zip Code: 77040

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Telephone: (281) 617-3217

Date: October 2017

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

**Additional items** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheets xx-xx)

Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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## Photographs

Name of Property: Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building  
City or Vicinity: Houston  
County, State: Harris, TX  
Photographer: SWCA Environmental Consultants  
Date Photographed: October 2017

Description: North façade, view south, with original glass block, exterior fluting, and fenestration pattern.  
Photo Number: 0001

Description: North façade and partial view west elevation, view southeast.  
Photo Number: 0002

Description: East elevation and north façade with original fenestration pattern, view southwest.  
Photo Number: 0003

Description: South and east elevations, view northwest. Original fenestration patterns and exterior materials remain.  
Photo Number: 0004

Description: Detail of entrance on north façade, view south. Original fluting, glass block, dentils, and flag pole remain in place.  
Photo Number: 0005

Description: Interior, first floor hallway in east wing, view north. Original structure and terrazzo flooring remain in place.  
Photo Number: 0006

Description: First floor lobby, view northeast. Original recessed ceiling details and front door openings remain with glass block windows.  
Photo Number: 0007

Description: Third floor lobby, view northeast. Original fossilized limestone wainscot and black stone baseboard remain in place.  
Photo Number: 0008

Description: Stair detail, view east. Original handrails, fossilized limestone wainscot, and black stone stringers remain in place.  
Photo Number: 0009

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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## **Narrative Description**

The Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation (SWSC) Building is a 25,167 square foot building on a 30,222 square foot parcel of land located at 2720 Leeland Street, approximately 1.25 miles southeast of downtown Houston, Texas. It is a three-story, H-plan building with a flat roof, fire-resistant steel construction, and concrete tilt-slab walls. Built in 1938 and designed by Russell Brown Company, the Modern Classical building was part of the Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation's first industrial campus in the United States which occupied three blocks along Leeland Street. The auxiliary buildings and structures were demolished c. 2006 and the SWSC building is all that remains.

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## **Location and Setting**

The SWSC Building is a 25,167 square-foot building on a 30,222 square-foot parcel of land and is located at 2720 Leeland Street, approximately 1.25 miles southeast of downtown Houston, Texas. It is a three-story, H-Plan building with a flat roof, fire-resistant steel frame, and concrete tilt-slab walls that are painted white. Described as Modern Classical, the building exhibits streamlined and abstracted elements of the Classical Style.

### *North (Primary) Elevation*

The building's primary façade faces north onto Leeland Street and is divided into three, symmetrical bays in an A-B-A pattern (see Photo 1). The recessed center bay forms the primary entrance to the building. The entrance is emphasized with an abstracted, classical temple front utilizing the entire bay and including a pediment, entablature, and column. The centered, double-door opening forms the base of the "column" with four vertical courses rising to meet the entablature mimicking enlarged fluting. Original glass-block towers flank the fluting, defining the column shaft. The entablature features an architrave and frieze with minimal ornament. Short, vertical grooves in the frieze reference Classical-style dentils. A truncated pediment sits above the cornice, forming a partial parapet. A total of six window openings flank the entrance with three on the east and three on the west facing opposite each other.

The first and third bays of the north façade are identical with a rectangular formation of 12 window openings, arranged with four openings for each of the 3 floors. Each window opening has a simple, rectangular sill and three abstract and streamlined pilasters separate the four columns of windows. Rather than projecting from the façade, these elements are flush with the wall and have vertical grooves mimicking the typical, Classical fluting. Finally, both corners of each bay are concavely rounded with fluting and an unornamented, rectangular capital.

### *East Elevation*

The east elevation faces onto Delano Street and is composed of four, asymmetrical bays (see Photos 3-4). The first bay is located at the northeast corner of the building and continues the streamlined ornamentation of the north façade. A flush pilaster with fluting terminates the bay and the cornice has vertical grooves similar to those in the center bay of the primary façade. A rectangular formation of six window openings (two openings per floor) is centered in this bay. The remaining three bays are recessed from the first bay and have less ornamentation. The second and third bays are similar, each with six window openings and a downspout. The fourth bay has three, smaller window openings and terminates in another pilaster.

## *South Elevation*

The south elevation is composed of three bays in an A-B-A pattern (see Photo 4). The first bay, located at the southwest corner of the building, has eight window openings and one door opening. The window openings are arranged three per floor on the second and third stories with two window openings with a center door opening on the first story. The second window openings on the second and third stories are slimmer than the other window openings and aligned with the door opening below. The second bay is deeply inset and creates the center courtyard of the building's H-Plan. It contains eight, symmetrically placed window openings of equal width. The third bay is similar to the first bay. The only difference between the two is a ninth window opening rather than a door opening.

## *West Elevation*

The west elevation faces onto a row of townhouses and is not visible from the public right-of-way (see Photo 2). It is similar to the east elevation with an emphasized first bay and recessed three bays. Likewise, window openings are similar to those in the east elevation in size and placement.

## *Interior*

The elevator shaft is located in the southeastern corner of the crossbar of the H-plan. L-shaped stairs wrap around the elevator shaft. The rest of the cross bar constitutes the elevator lobby, and the original recessed ceilings remain on two of three floors. Other original features appear intermittently. Each level features original terrazzo floors in the elevator lobby, and the stairs retain many of the vinyl treads, wooden risers, and black stone stringers. Limestone wainscot remains inconsistently in elevator lobbies and stairwells. Two-toned terrazzo flooring features heavily in the first floor, where it extends in both the H-plan stems in addition to the elevator lobby. There is also original terrazzo flooring the southern corner of the west wing. Though no original interior partition walls remain, some punctures into the concrete structure identify where walls were located originally. Based on the first floor terrazzo and the remaining concrete framing, it is presumed that there was a central corridor flowing through both stems and the elevator lobby on each floor.

The SWSC Building was originally part of a larger Schlumberger industrial campus with sheds and warehouses (see Figure 5). These associated structures and buildings were demolished c. 2006. Beyond the loss of these resources, however, the building has undergone few exterior alterations. Originally, the first and third bays of the north façade had the word 'Schlumberger' along the cornice lines (see Figures 3-4). The signs were covered over following the company's departure from the building c. 1956. As of October 2017, the building is vacant, though the current owners plan to rehabilitate the building into mixed-use retail and office space using historic preservation tax credits.

## **Integrity**

The Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building retains its integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and design. Aside from the removal of many original windows, the SWSC building retains most of its original exterior materials and detailing including fenestration pattern. These, in addition to many extant interior features like terrazzo flooring, ceilings, stairs, the elevator shaft, and wainscoting contribute to the integrity of materials, workmanship, and design. Though the building has a somewhat diminished integrity of association and setting following Schlumberger's relocation to newer facilities, the loss of the industrial complex, and the changing demographics of the neighborhood, the building retains its integrity of feeling, evoking the high-end and high-style materials and design omnipresent in corporate office buildings among Houston's oil and gas leaders.



Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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## Statement of Significance

The Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation (SWSC) Building is located at 2720 Leeland Street in the East Downtown Management District of Houston, Texas. Designed by Russell Brown Company with Hubbard Construction Company as the General Contractors, the building was constructed in 1938 as part of Schlumberger's first United States (U.S.) Campus. The Modern Classical style administration building originally held the offices for SWSC and other subsidiary executives, including Houston philanthropist and art collector John de Menil. Originally surrounded by Schlumberger warehouses and sheds, the SWSC Building is all that remains of the former industrial property (see Figure 5). The property is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A for Commerce and Industry and under Criterion C for Architecture. The building is significant for serving as the headquarters of the Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation, a leader in the oil and gas industry in 20th Century Houston known for inventing and manufacturing electric well logging equipment used for taking geophysical surveys. A notable work of Russell Brown Company, the SWSC Building is an excellent example of the Modern Classical style blending modernist architectural massing and form with traditional details. The period of significance of is 1938-1956, spanning the years Schlumberger occupied the building.

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As of 2017, Schlumberger is a global company supplying technology, information solutions, and project services to customers of the oil and gas industry. Schlumberger Limited serves as a parent company to numerous subsidiaries both internationally and within the US. The following contexts are designed to provide a brief history of the Schlumberger family, the company's foundation, and its early presence in Houston. It is not a comprehensive corporate history. A history of the family, beginning with the births of Conrad and Marcel Schlumberger in the late nineteenth century is included to illustrate the importance of the brothers' inventions and the significant role of members of the Schlumberger family in the development of the company. Without either of these two factors, the company would neither have grown to become a global corporation nor have founded SWSC. The history of the company's foundation as La Société de Prospection Électrique (Pros) has been included to explain the shift in clients from mineral mining to oil and gas and the group's early, rapid growth. Finally, SWSC's history is included as the Schlumberger subsidiary for which the property was built and as the primary occupant.

### *The Schlumberger Family and Electrical Prospecting*

The Schlumberger brothers, Conrad and Marcel, were born to Paul and Marguerite Schlumberger at the end of the nineteenth century (1878 and 1884 respectively).<sup>1</sup> Paul was a member of a wealthy cotton-weaving family and worked as a textile manufacturer in the Alsatian region of France. Marguerite was a political activist campaigning for women's rights and served as head of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance after World War I (WWI).<sup>2</sup> The brothers were two of six Schlumberger children and both expressed early desires to become scientists.

Paul supported both sons' ambitions, sending them to Paris to further their education. In 1900, Conrad graduated from L'École Polytechnique de Paris with a degree in physics. Marcel graduated from L'École Centrale des Arts et Manufactures in 1907 with an engineering degree before continuing his education at L'École des Mines.<sup>3</sup>

During his studies, Conrad became interested in earth science and developed a theory concerning the use of electrical current to identify subsurface metal ore deposits, a technique known as electrical prospecting. He posited

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<sup>1</sup> Schlumberger, "1870s-1910s: An Early Passion." Accessed October 17, 2017 <http://www.slb.com/about/history.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Jon Kutner, Jr., "Schlumberger," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dzxsxg>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Schlumberger, "1870s-1910s: An Early Passion." Accessed October 17, 2017 <http://www.slb.com/about/history.aspx>



that because metal ores had a different degree of electrical conductivity, they could be distinguished from their surroundings by generating a subsurface electrical field and recording voltage measurements at the surface. As ore-bearing rock was more conductive than surrounding non-ore-bearing rock, changes in the voltage measurements could indicate the presence of metal ore deposits. These measurements were mapped using lines of equal potential, called equipotential curves, which, when compared with typical measurements of non-ore-bearing rock, could reveal the location of deposits.<sup>4</sup>

In order to further research his method of electrical prospecting, Conrad accepted a physics teaching appointment at L'École des Mines in 1910. There, he had access to equipment and labs with which to begin testing his theories both in the lab and in the field. Naming the process 'wireline logging,' Conrad successfully mapped equipotential curves at his estate in Normandy two years later.<sup>5</sup> During this attempt, he also discovered the ability to identify features of the subsurface deposit, specifically its extent and the direction of any formation layer dips. The ability to map these dips proved invaluable in the technology's later use for finding oil as these features often created pockets that could trap oil and gas deposits.<sup>6</sup>

World War I interrupted Conrad's research when both he and his brother Marcel joined the French Army. At this time, the brothers formed a partnership, funded by Paul with an initial investment of 500,000 francs. His only requirement was that the brothers focus on scientific gain before financial success. Conrad continued his professorship and research at L'École des Mines in Paris, while Marcel worked at his home in Normandy.<sup>7</sup>

In 1920, Conrad published the findings of his 1912 experiments with wireline logging and the brothers opened an office at 30 rue Fabert in Paris. Although slow at first, by 1923 the Schlumberger brothers' work had begun to increase, leading Conrad to resign his position at L'École des Mines.<sup>8</sup> The brothers' early projects involved geophysical surveys around the world, including countries such as Canada, South Africa, Congo, the US, and Romania.<sup>9</sup> It was not until the late 1920s, however, and the addition of Conrad's son-in-law Henri Doll to the team, that business truly began to take off.

### *Société de Prospection Électrique (Pros)*

In 1926, the Schlumberger brothers founded the Société de Prospection Électrique or "Pros." The firm's early clients were predominantly mining companies hiring Pros to perform electrical surface prospecting for metal ore. Although the company had a few oil-related clients, they did not gain success in the oil industry until 1927 when they were hired by the Pechelbronn Oil Company in Alsace, France to help find oil.<sup>10</sup>

Pros' entrance into the oil market was largely the result of an invention by Henri Doll, Conrad's son-in-law and a physicist. Oil deposits reached greater depths than the metal ore the brothers had been searching for. As a result, they needed a tool to help extend the range from which they could take readings. Doll developed an electrical probe or sonde that could be extended down a borehole and take measurements at various depths.<sup>11</sup> In 1927, the brothers

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<sup>4</sup> Schlumberger, "1870s-1910s: An Early Passion." Accessed October 17, 2017 <http://www.slb.com/about/history.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Jon Kutner, Jr., "Schlumberger," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dzxsxg>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Schlumberger, "1920s: The First Well Log." Accessed October 17, 2017 <http://www.slb.com/about/history/1920s.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> Jon Kutner, Jr., "Schlumberger," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dzxsxg>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Jon Kutner, Jr., "Schlumberger," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed October 17, 2017,

and Doll successfully took readings from a 500-meter hole and initiated a process known as electrical coring. This success led to high demand for electrical coring around the world.<sup>12</sup>

By 1929, Pros had teams carrying out surveys in Argentina, Ecuador, India, Japan, the Soviet Union, Venezuela, and the U.S. In conjunction with Doll, the Schlumberger brothers continued to refine well logging techniques. They invented the continuous-recording hand recorder and then the Spontaneous Potential (SP) log in 1931. The handheld continuous-recording device made the logging process much more efficient, allowing a technician to record up to 1,000 feet in an hour where previously he would have to record the log point-by-point.

In addition to the discovery of new technologies, Pros underwent massive growth during the 1930s. Between 1933 and the start of World War II (WWII), the company grew from eight to 140 teams across the world. Pros had also developed into three international companies that formed the basis of the global parent company, Schlumberger Limited.

### *Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation (SWSC)*

In 1932, Pros earned its first American contract with the Shell Oil Company. Pros teams were hired to run wireline logs in California and along the Texas Gulf Coast.<sup>13</sup> The exposure provided by this initial agreement led to more work with wildcatters in Texas and Oklahoma. In 1935, Marcel and Conrad founded a new firm in Houston called the Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation (SWSC).<sup>14</sup> The introduction of this new branch of the company signaled the growing importance of the U.S. market, with more than half their electrical logging teams working stateside.<sup>15</sup>

Led by Eugene Leonardon, the new company had its first headquarters in the Niels Esperson building at 808 Travis Street until 1938 when they started a new campus east of Downtown Houston. The main SWSC building in question housed company offices and also served as the base from which John de Menil, Conrad's son-in-law, ran the firm's South American and Middle Eastern wireline operations.<sup>16</sup> Equipment used in their electrical logging efforts was manufactured in other buildings in the industrial campus.

As a result of the Conrad's cutting edge ideas, Schlumberger became a leader in the field of electrical resistivity survey. Electrical resistivity survey utilizes electrical frequencies to identify subsurface abnormalities. The electrical waves respond differently to types of materials, so the survey method allows for differentiation between soil, rocks, and oil.<sup>17</sup> This method is also used to help identify archaeological features. By using the electrical resistivity survey, Schlumberger could advise companies about where drilling would be most effective. Schlumberger was the first company ever to record an electrical resistivity well log in France in the 1920s.<sup>18</sup> Their work in electrical resistivity survey was innovative that a particular arrangement of electrode placement which consisted of four collinear electrodes was and is known as the Schlumberger Array. Advantages to this setup were

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<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dzxsxg>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Schlumberger, "1920s: The First Well Log." Accessed October 17, 2017 <http://www.slb.com/about/history/1920s.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> Jon Kutner, Jr., "Schlumberger," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dzxsxg>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Schlumberger, "1930s: Technology in Demand." Accessed October 17, 2017 <http://www.slb.com/about/history/1930s.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Jon Kutner, Jr., "Schlumberger," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dzxsxg>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> "Electrical Resistance Survey," Wikipedia. Accessed October 17, 2017

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electrical\\_resistance\\_survey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electrical_resistance_survey)

<sup>18</sup> Schlumberger, "1920s: The First Well Log." Accessed October 17, 2017 <http://www.slb.com/about/history/1920s.aspx>

that fewer electrodes had to be adjusted for each sounding and potential electrode cables could be shorter in length.<sup>19</sup> Their success in electrical resistivity survey allowed Schlumberger to expand into other areas of the oil and gas industry, growing quickly to become the Schlumberger Overseas Company.

Conrad Schlumberger died in 1936, leaving Marcel to run the company. Even without Conrad, however, Schlumberger grew rapidly. In 1940, Schlumberger officially moved its entire company headquarters to their Houston office on Leeland Street. At the new location, several buildings, including offices, research labs, machine shops, a woodworking shop, an auto repair shop, and a general warehouse housed the different stages of the manufacturing process. The industrial campus was composed of roughly eighteen buildings by 1951 allowing Schlumberger to continue to manufacture electric logging equipment for use in the U.S. and abroad.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the interruptions caused by World War II, the Schlumberger Company, now based in their Leeland location, invented and implemented new well logging techniques during the 1940s. In 1942, Schlumberger implemented the first dipmeter, a tool for measuring the direction and angle of subsurface rock formations in relationship to the horizontal planes.<sup>21</sup> The dipmeter is essential for determining at which angle the oil would leave the earth. Schlumberger also deployed the first casing collars in 1946.<sup>22</sup> Casing collars connect two pieces of casing together and ensure that they do not fall out of alignment.<sup>23</sup> “Casing” is the term used for the large hollow pipes that are cemented into place to provide a clear, protected run for the drill as it goes through the earth to oil under the surface.<sup>24</sup> The SWSC’s most significant contribution occurred in 1947 when they implemented the first induction log, which uses electrical currents to distinguish oil from water in order to prevent wasted drilling efforts.<sup>25</sup> That same year, SWSC began using a new type of well logger called a nine-galvanometer R9 recorder, which allowed the company to take multiple logs simultaneously.<sup>26</sup> Some other technologies developed during this period include the 1948 Microlog which was “capable of taking high-resolution measurements close to the borehole wall and in very thin beds” and the Microlateralog which “investigated deeper and delivered data on the resistivity of the flushed zone—the rock around the borehole flushed with drilling fluids.”<sup>27</sup> These and other inventions allowed for significant advances in the oil (both oilfield and offshore) and gas industry by the 1950s.

In 1946, Marcel appointed his son Pierre in charge of a new subsidiary company, North American Wireline Operations, also located in Houston at the SWSC Building.<sup>28</sup> By the early 1950s, Schlumberger and its subsidiaries

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<sup>19</sup> “Exploration Technique: DC Resistivity Survey (Schlumberger Array),” Open Energy Information, National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Accessed October 17, 2017 [https://openei.org/wiki/DC\\_Resistivity\\_Survey\\_\(Schlumberger\\_Array\)](https://openei.org/wiki/DC_Resistivity_Survey_(Schlumberger_Array))

<sup>20</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Houston, Texas, 1924-1951, Vol. 4, Sheets 464 and 470, *Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*, ProQuest.com.

<sup>21</sup> Schlumberger, “1940s: New Frontiers.” Accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.slb.com/about/history/1940s.aspx>; Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “Dipmeter.” Accessed October 18, 2017 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dipmeter>; Dr. Miriam Hill, “Dip and Strike on Geologic Maps,” Physical Geography II, Jacksonville State University, September 6, 2017. Accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.jsu.edu/dept/geography/mhill/phylabt2/lab4/dipf.html>

<sup>22</sup> Schlumberger, “1940s: New Frontiers.” Accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.slb.com/about/history/1940s.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> Oilfield Glossary, “Casing Collar,” Schlumberger. Accessed October 18, 2017 [http://www.glossary.oilfield.slb.com/Terms/c/casing\\_collar.aspx](http://www.glossary.oilfield.slb.com/Terms/c/casing_collar.aspx)

<sup>24</sup> Oilfield Glossary, “Casing,” Schlumberger. Accessed October 18, 2017 <http://www.glossary.oilfield.slb.com/en/Terms/c/casing.aspx>

<sup>25</sup> Schlumberger, “1940s: New Frontiers.” Accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.slb.com/about/history/1940s.aspx>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “1950s: New Technology, Strategic Acquisitions.” *Schlumberger*, accessed October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017, <http://www.slb.com/about/history/1950s.aspx>.

<sup>28</sup> Jon Kutner, Jr., “Schlumberger,” Handbook of Texas Online, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dzxsxg>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010.

Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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in Houston had outgrown the original campus in East Downtown. The Gulf Freeway was completed in 1952 and a year later, Houston architects Mackie & Kamrath completed a new campus located south of the highway.<sup>29</sup> By 1956, the entire company had left the first campus on Leeland Street. In the 1990s, Schlumberger moved its offices to Sugar Land, Texas, a Houston suburb. As a result, the Gulf Freeway location became a business park and later was purchased by the University of Houston in 2008 for the University's Energy Research Park.<sup>30</sup>

### John de Menil

Born in France in 1904 to Georges Menu and Madeleine de Menil, John de Menil grew to become an oil executive with Schlumberger, a patron of the arts, and a major Houston philanthropist. He began his career as a banker in Paris after graduating from the University of Paris in 1922 and earning an advanced political science degree there in 1925.<sup>31</sup> He married Dominique Schlumberger, daughter of Conrad Schlumberger, in 1931.<sup>32</sup>

After leaving the bank to serve in the French Army during the Moroccan Tribal Wars, John de Menil joined the Schlumberger family company in 1938.<sup>33</sup> Until this time Marcel, Conrad, and Henri Doll had provided technical expertise but the company was in desperate need of the financial organization brought by Menil. His first job was to travel to Romania to settle tax issues surrounding the exchange of international currencies for well logging services.<sup>34</sup>

During WWII, Menil was drafted by the French army and assigned to intelligence work in Bucharest. Following the Nazi invasion of France, he traveled to the U.S. where he was joined by his wife, Dominique, in 1941.<sup>35</sup> During the remaining years of WWII, Menil aided in restructuring the company whose headquarters had been in Paris.<sup>36</sup> After traveling between New York, Houston, Venezuela, and Trinidad, the Menils settled in Houston where John managed the South American and Middle Eastern operations from the SWSC Building. Soon after, Menil was named president of Schlumberger Overseas and continued to work from the 1938 building.<sup>37</sup>

The Menils became U.S. citizens in 1962 and John retired in 1969.<sup>38</sup> During their lives, the Menils had amassed a large art collection including modern and primitive artworks. In addition to his work with Schlumberger, John de Menil participated in the work of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston.<sup>39</sup> He was the founder of the Institute for the Arts at Rice University and the Black Arts Center, as well as

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<sup>29</sup> Anna Mod, *Building Modern Houston*, Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2011. Pg. 35.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Bonnin, "New Energy Research Park Energizes March to Tier One," *University of Houston Magazine*. Fall 2009. Accessed October 18, 2017 <http://www.uh.edu/magazine/09f/features/energy/>

<sup>31</sup> Linda Peterson, "Menil, John De," accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmeny>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Modified on September 12, 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Reed Karaim, "How the de Menils and Their Art Museum Changed Houston," *Architect*, June 19, 2013. Accessed October 18, 2017 [http://www.architectmagazine.com/awards/aia-honor-awards/how-the-de-menils-and-their-art-museum-changed-houston\\_o](http://www.architectmagazine.com/awards/aia-honor-awards/how-the-de-menils-and-their-art-museum-changed-houston_o)

<sup>36</sup> Linda Peterson, "Menil, John De," accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmeny>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Modified on September 12, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> William Middleton, "A House That Rattled Texas Windows," *The New York Times*, June 3, 2004. Accessed October 18, 2017 <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/03/garden/a-house-that-rattled-texas-windows.html>

<sup>38</sup> Linda Peterson, "Menil, John De," accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmeny>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Modified on September 12, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

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a major benefactor of St. Thomas University.<sup>40</sup> In 1958, the Menils established the Menil Foundation in order to facilitate their cultural philanthropy.<sup>41</sup>

John de Menil served on the board of trustees for the Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Primitive Art, and Sarah Lawrence College in New York.<sup>42</sup> He was also a member of the board of trustees for the Institute of International Education and the Institute for Religion. Beyond his philanthropic endeavors, Menil was a member of the Ramada Club, the River Oaks Country Club, and the Petroleum Club. He passed away in Houston on June 1, 1973.<sup>43</sup>

## East Downtown

East Downtown is a triangular shaped area located directly east of downtown and bounded by U.S. Highway 59 (U.S.-59) on the northwest, Interstate 45 (I-45) on the southwest, and railroad tracks to the east. Today the area has an eclectic mix of industrial, institutional, residential, recreational, and commercial resources reflecting its equally diverse development.

Following the founding of the City of Houston in 1836, the city was divided into geographic and political sectors called wards. A total of six wards were added before the end of the nineteenth century. The political subdivided wards were abandoned in the early 1900s, but the geographically and culturally the names remain to this day. The area now known as East Downtown was originally part of the Third Ward. Throughout the nineteenth century, the area featured Victorian era mansions populated by the city's fashionable upper class.<sup>44</sup> By the late nineteenth century, however, Houston's elite largely abandoned the neighborhood in favor of the burgeoning suburbs. The arrival of the railroad in East Downtown at the end of the nineteenth century further fostered the transition of the neighborhood from residential to a predominantly commercial and light industrial area.<sup>45</sup> During the first half of the twentieth century, the area was gradually redeveloped as a light industrial center with commercial properties and large warehouses interspersed with some remaining worker housing.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1930s Cantonese Chinese immigrants relocated from downtown to East Downtown in search of cheaper land. They opened restaurants, grocery stores and other businesses, and the area came to be known as "Chinatown." Vietnamese and other Asian immigrants joined them in subsequent decades.<sup>47</sup> However, the construction of the Gulf Freeway in 1952 bisected the cultural Third Ward, hastening the area's decline in the face of suburbanization. By the 1980s and 1990s, most of the Asian population had also abandoned the area for southwest Houston and the suburbs, and the area began another downturn and transition. In 2002 a *Houston Press* article described the area as a "silent, godforsaken stretch of no-mans-land."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Grace Glueck, "The de Menil Family: the Medici of Modern Art," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1986. Accessed October 18, 2017 <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/05/18/magazine/the-de-menil-family-the-medici-of-modern-art.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>41</sup> Linda Peterson, "Menil, John De," accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmeny>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Modified on September 12, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Grace Glueck, "The de Menil Family: the Medici of Modern Art," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1986. Accessed October 18, 2017 <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/05/18/magazine/the-de-menil-family-the-medici-of-modern-art.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>43</sup> Linda Peterson, "Menil, John De," accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmeny>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Modified on September 12, 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Chris Lane, "The Changing Face of Houston-East Downtown," *Houston Press*, December 15, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Lane, "The Changing Face of Houston-East Downtown."

<sup>46</sup> Sanborn maps prior to 1925 do not exist for this part of Houston.

<sup>47</sup> Jenalia Moreno, "Chinatown no longer; Call it EaDo, as in 'east downtown.'" *Houston Chronicle*, Saturday, October 17, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> John Nova Lomax, "Glamorous Youth." *Houston Press*, November 28, 2002.



Like many urban warehouse districts in cities across the country, East Downtown (known to locally as “EaDo” since 2008) has very recently experienced a renaissance as a gentrified haven for young professionals. Scattered site townhouses began to appear in the last decade of the twentieth century yet the major catalyst for its transformation was the 2012 construction of the \$95.5 million BBVA Compass Stadium for the Houston Dynamo major league soccer (MLS) team in the “formerly desolate,” “gritty” area east of downtown Houston.<sup>49</sup> The neighborhood’s prime location – including proximity to the 2015 Metro light rail line extension that runs along Texas Avenue connecting the stadium to downtown, and reasonable real estate prices, helped to foster substantial retail and residential development.

While the neighborhood witnessed the demolition of several older buildings in favor of mixed-use, townhouse and condo residential development, interest in historic character and sustainability encouraged the adaptive reuse of many warehouses and commercial buildings of “old Houston.”<sup>50</sup> Developer David Denenburg and his partners purchased the 1917 Cheek-Neal Coffee building (NRHP 2016) designed by Joseph Finger and James Ruskin Bailey and are working on its redevelopment utilizing the historic tax credits.<sup>51</sup> The 1913 Waddell Furniture warehouse, a city landmark, was converted into 94 loft apartments with pristine skyline views in 2017.<sup>52</sup> Other adaptive reuse projects in the area include office and retail spaces, art galleries, bars, restaurants, and a brewery.

### Modern Classical Architecture

Modern Classical architecture, often categorized as Art Deco or Art Moderne architecture, blends modernist architectural massing and form with traditional details.<sup>53</sup> The style was popular through the 1930s and 1940s for Depression-era projects. Buildings of a Modern Classical style typically are devoid of or have simplified ornamentation with a core monument of rectilinear design. Specific design aspects such as (columns and cornices) as well as instances of applied decoration such as (low-relief sculptural carvings and flattened moldings) were often rendered with a geometric or stylized emphasis.<sup>54</sup>

In the Schlumberger Building, the traditional elements of its design are easy to identify: symmetrical plans and façade, exterior fluting, and the dentils on the cornice all highlight an adherence to traditional architecture. However, the building is nonetheless rooted in modern design as well. The Modern Classical style manifests itself through the use of modern form and materials. The rectilinear form, large steel windows, and the stark white exterior marks the design as clearly modern. The use of concrete elevations, over more traditional brick or stone exteriors, cements the building’s Modern Classical style.<sup>55</sup> Through the use of Modern Classical design, the Schlumberger building pays homage to the company’s inventiveness of and innovative applications of new technologies as well as the cautious conservatism of Houston’s business community.

Most Houston buildings designed during this period fall into either the Art Deco or Art Moderne categories, however, some other Modern Classical buildings in the city have been identified. All three of these styles were especially popular in East Downtown’s industrial building stock from the interwar period. Art Deco and Art Moderne buildings located east of Downtown Houston include the 1935 Houston Casket Company by Moore &

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<sup>49</sup> Catherine Meredith, “Eado’s Big Changes.” *Bisnow London*, March 2, 2016. Accessed January 9, 2017, <https://www.bisnow.com/houston/news/neighborhood/how-houston-is-making-eado-happen-56787>.

<sup>50</sup> Meredith, “Eado’s Big Changes.”

<sup>51</sup> Catie Dixon, “Historic Eado Building to be Redeveloped.” *Bisnow*, July 24, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Nancy Sarnoff, “Imagine a vacant East End furniture building as lofts.” *Houston Chronicle*, January 4, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Gregory Smith, “Jack County Courthouse,” *National Register of Historic Places*, December 2012, pg. 13-14.

<sup>54</sup> Gregory Smith, “Jack County Courthouse,” *National Register of Historic Places*, December 2012, pg. 13-14.

<sup>55</sup> Pun intended.

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Lloyd at 1717 Live Oak Street and the 1948 Gribble Stamp & Stencil Company building by C.R. Berry and Company. The only other Modern Classical building identified in East Downtown is the 1936 Lone Star Creamery Company (now Oak Farms Dairy) designed by J.M. Glover and located at 3412 Leeland Street.

### The Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building (2720 Leeland Street)

After founding the new U.S. company, SWSC, the Schlumbergers commissioned the Russell Brown Company architects to design the Modern Classical style building in East Downtown. Although they handled predominantly residential design, reference to their work with the SWSC Building was found in a previous City of Houston Protected Landmark Application for the Edward Weil House and an abstract for an article appearing in a 1938 volume of *Architectural Concrete*.<sup>56</sup> No other references to the architects were discovered. Schlumberger hired Hubbard Construction Company to complete the construction of the building which was part of a larger campus with warehouses and sheds to manufacture and house the company's wireline logging equipment.

Homebuilder Russell Brown (c. 1877-1963) started the Russell Brown Company in 1907 and by the 1920s, the firm had offices in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and Los Angeles. Notable residential projects include the 1928 Herbert L. Kockernot House, San Antonio, the 1929 O.R. Seagraves Ranch, the 1929 Talbott F. Rothwell House, Beaumont, the 1931 W. F. Morgan House, Olmos Park, as well as several buildings in Houston's Westmoreland Historic District (NRHP 1994).<sup>57</sup> Though Russell Brown's newspaper advertisements from the early twentieth century claim them to be both residential and commercial architects and builders, only one other commercial building has been identified as designed by Russell Brown Company; the Simpson Building is a Contributing Resource to the NRHP-listed Historic Commercial District in Ardmore, Oklahoma. Russell Brown Company also served as the contractor for Houston's original Jefferson Davis Hospital (NRHP 2005).

An October 1954 construction outline describes the interior materials. The interior walls were covered in metal lath and plaster as well as wood paneling, while the ceiling utilized acoustical plaster. Carpet was used for finished flooring, and furnishings were purchased primarily from Knoll Associates, with some pieces from Hermann Miller or Italian designers. Glass in the building was sand blasted, and the Leeland Street location also used custom mill work and aluminum doors.<sup>58</sup>

An April 1958 furniture inventory from the Leeland Street location also describes recessed lights, fluorescent light strips, bamboo blinds, multiple art pieces by Matisse, and desks designed with black frames and teak or formica tops. The inventory includes architectural illustrations of the desks, chairs, tables, and lamps, and it becomes clear that the de Menil's commitment to modern design extended into the furnishings of the SWSC building. Much of the furnishings were shipped for use in one of their South American offices.<sup>59</sup>

Between 1939 and 1944 the building housed only Schlumberger's Well Surveying Corporation. After 1944, the complex also housed Schlumberger Overseas Oil Well Surveyors, of which John de Menil served as President. By 1959, the building is listed in the Houston City Directory as vacant following the completion of Schlumberger's 1956 Gulf Freeway Campus.

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<sup>56</sup> McElroy, W.A. "New Home for the 'Slumberjay'." *Architectural Concrete* 4 (1938): 34-35.

<sup>57</sup> Westmoreland Civic Association, "Westmoreland Historic District" National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1994, 43.

<sup>58</sup> Howard Barnstone Papers 1947-1987, MSS 178, Box 2, Folder 2. Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



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Between 1956 and 1958, prior to relocating to the Gulf Freeway Campus, the Schlumberger Overseas Company contracted Houston architects Bolton and Brownstone and contractor Ralph D. Galbreath to do repairs and upgrades on the Leeland building, including waterproofing around exterior walls and the roof, air conditioning repairs, a new defroster, a new intercom system, vinyl flooring repairs, and electrical repairs.<sup>60</sup> Bolton and Barnstone also provided architectural services directly to the de Menils for their homes in New York City, Trinidad, Venezuela, and Argentina.<sup>61</sup> The invoice records available contain documentation from framers, photographers, and electricians, indicating that the de Menils love and appreciation for art and its display spilled over into the Schlumberger offices on Leeland.<sup>62</sup>

In 1968, the Leeland Street building held the Harris County Concentrated Employment Program. Three years later in addition to this public entity, the building also housed the State Vocational School Training Program. Finally, from 1974 into the 1990s, the building and campus housed Industrial Education programs for the Houston Community College System and became the Leeland Center for Industrial Education.

During the late 1990s and 2000s, the main office building was vacant and fell into disrepair. The surrounding complex of auxiliary buildings and structures was demolished c. 2006. By the 2010s, the area experienced a resurgence in the form of athletic complexes and housing. Town houses have been built directly east of the building and replaced many historic buildings in the surrounding area.

## Summary

The Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Industry and Commerce. Between its construction in 1938 and 1956, the SWSC building served as the first United States headquarters for the company and its subsidiaries and is the only remaining portion of a once larger industrial campus. During its occupancy of the building, the company became a leader and contributed significantly to the oil and gas industry by introducing new equipment and technologies related to the electric well logging. Furthermore, the building served as offices for art patron and philanthropist John de Menil for the majority of his career at Schlumberger. Designed by Russell Brown Company, the remarkably intact Modern Classical administration building is a rare example of the style in Houston and thus also architecturally significant under Criterion C.

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<sup>60</sup> Howard Barnstone Papers 1947-1987, MSS 178, Box 1, Folders 8-10. Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

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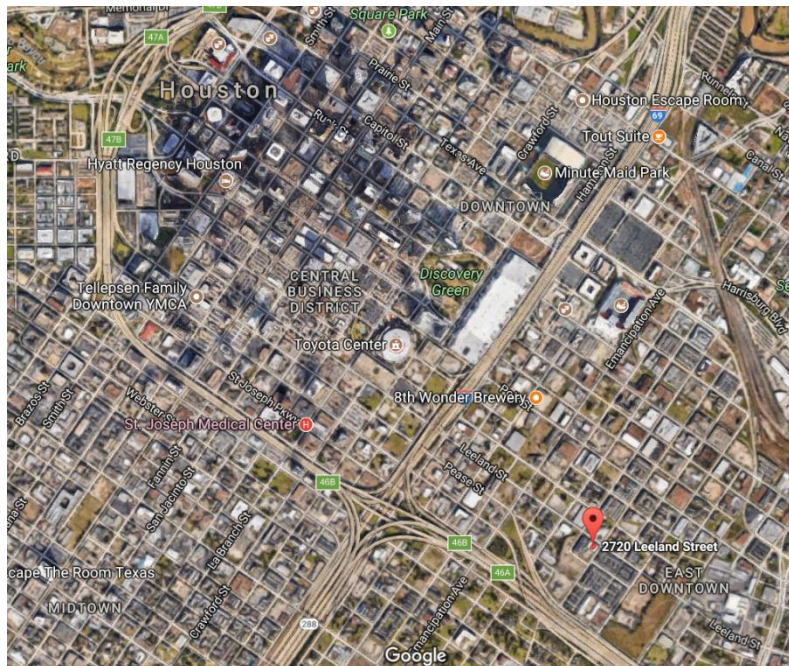
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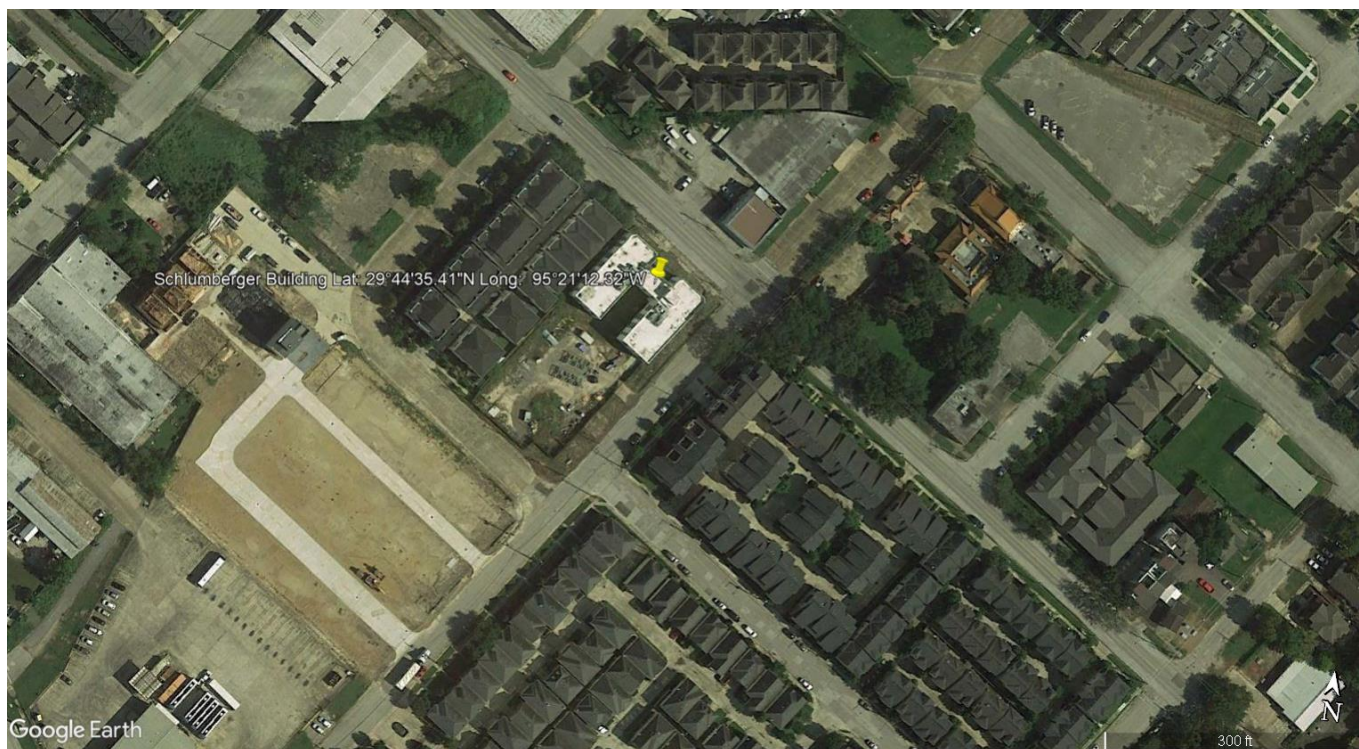


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Map 1: SWSC Building at 2720 Leeland Street, Google Location Map, Accessed September 26, 2017



Map 2: Google Earth Map, Accessed September 26, 2017



# SBR Draft

Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

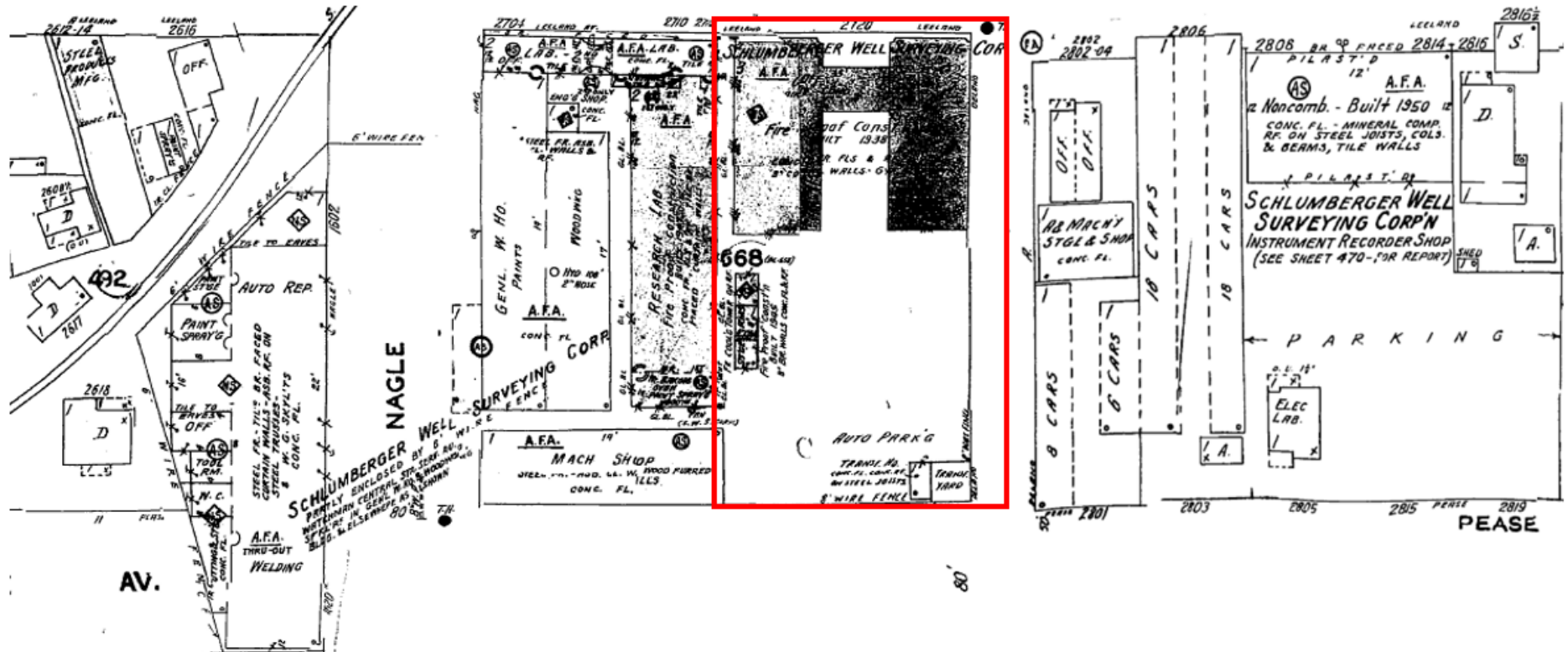


Figure 1: 1924-1951 Sanborn Map, Vol. 4, Sheet 470 (left) and Sheet 464 (right) showing nominated parcel with larger complex, which spanned blocks 492, 668, and 674 between Leeland and Pease Avenues. (ProQuest).



# SBR Draft

Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

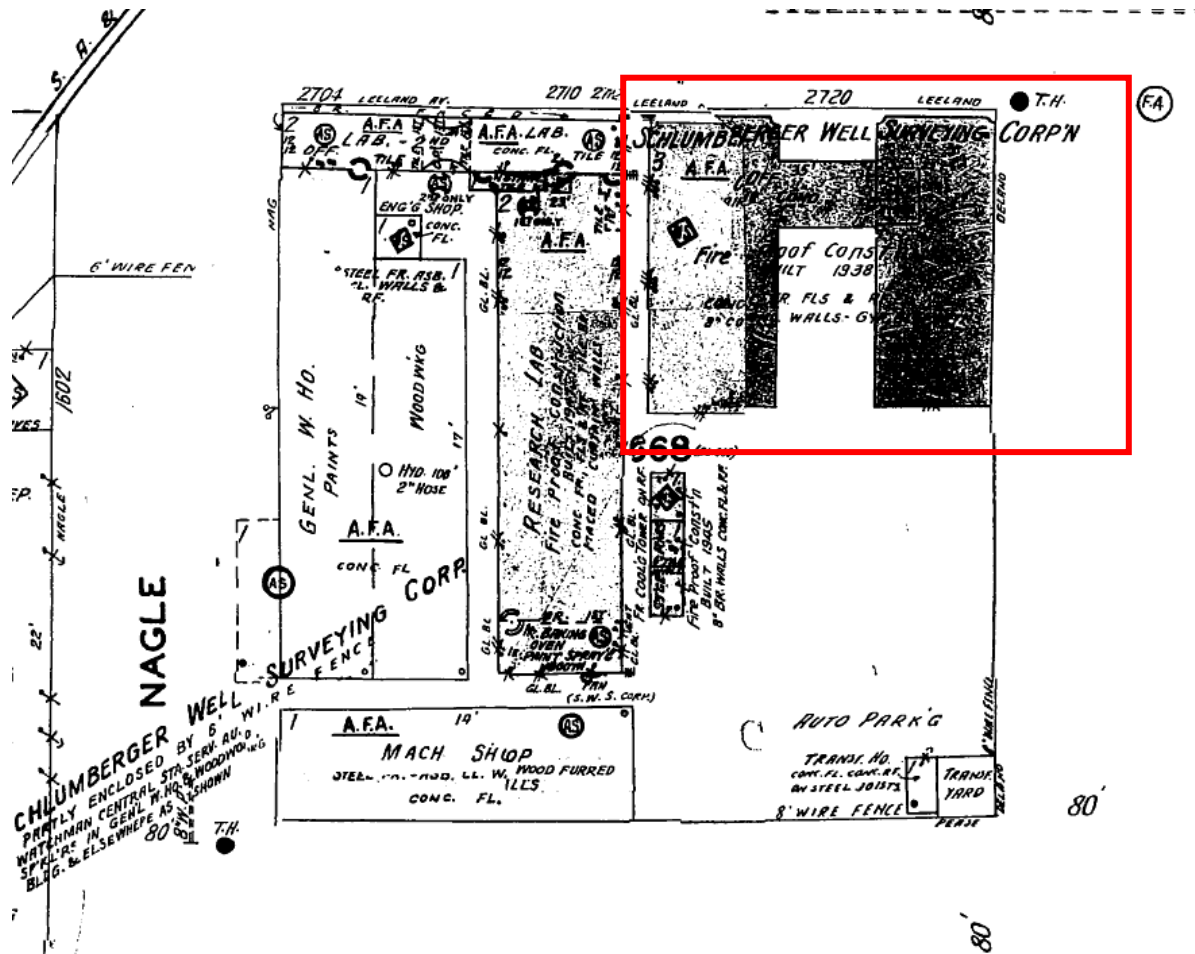


Figure 2: 1924-1951 Sanborn Map, Vol. 4, Sheet 470 showing nominated property (ProQuest).

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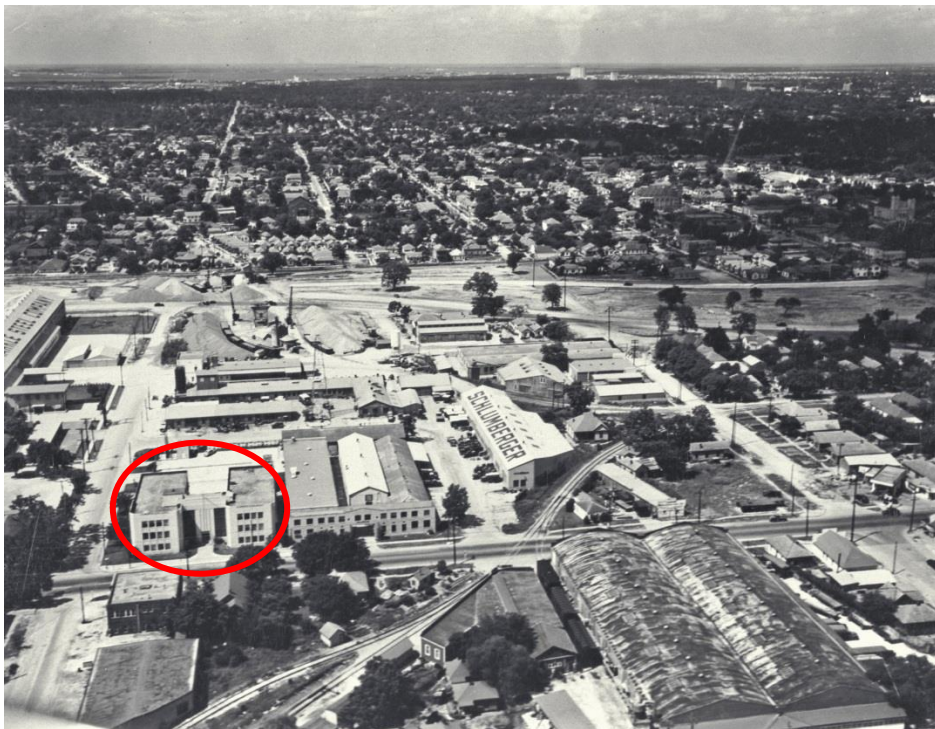


**Figure 3:** N façade and W elevation, view SE, c. 1938.  
(Photo courtesy of Schlumberger Corporate Communications)



**Figure 4:** Partial N façade, view SE, c. 1938. (Photo courtesy of Schlumberger Corporate Communications)





**Figure 5:** Aerial of SWSC campus, c. 1940.  
(Photo courtesy of Schlumberger Corporate Communications)



**Figure 6:** Interior SWSC corner office, c. 1940. (Photo courtesy of Schlumberger Corporate Communications)

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Photo 1 – North façade, view south, with original glass block, exterior fluting, and fenestration pattern.



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Photo 2 – North façade and partial view west elevation, view southeast.





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Photo 3 – East elevation and north façade with original fenestration pattern, view southwest.



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Photo 4 – South and east elevations, view northwest. Original fenestration patterns and exterior materials remain.



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Photo 5 – Detail of entrance on north façade, view south. Original fluting, glass block, dentils, and flag pole remain in place.



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Photo 6 – Interior, first floor hallway in east wing, view north. Original structure and terrazzo flooring remain in place.





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Photo 7 – First floor lobby, view northeast. Original recessed ceiling details and front door openings remain in place with the glass block.



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Photo 8 – Third floor lobby, view northeast. Original fossilized limestone wainscot and black stone baseboard remain in place.



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Photo 9 – Stair detail, view east. Original handrails, fossilized limestone wainscot, and black stone stringers remain in place.

